Saylesville Elementary School

LINCOLN

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 15, 2005

School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Saylesville Elementary School from April 11- 15, 2005.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

♦ *How well do students learn at Saylesville Elementary School?*

♦ *How well does the teaching at Saylesville Elementary School affect learning?*

♦ *How well does Saylesville Elementary School support learning and teaching?*

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

> Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

> *The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Saylesville Elementary School distinct.*

> *The team did not compare this school to any other school.*

> *When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.*

> **The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

> The team made its judgment explicit.

> This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 126 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Team members had conversations with various faculty and staff members for over 35.5 hours.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 35 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

♦ *Important enough to include in the report*

♦ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*

♦ *Set in the present, and*

♦ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Saylesville Elementary School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Lincoln District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Lincoln School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Saylesville Elementary School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located in Lincoln, Rhode Island, Saylesville Elementary School was built in 1972. Four classrooms, an office and bathrooms were added in 1995. During these renovations, the eight open classrooms were each divided into two separate classrooms with connecting doors. The school presently serves 358 students in grades two through six. The four sixth grade classrooms function as a modified middle school taught by a team of teachers with each teacher instructing a specific content area

Of the 358 students, approximately 98% are white. The remaining two percent are African American, Hispanic, Russian or Portuguese. Thirteen percent qualify for the subsidized breakfast and lunch programs; two percent receive ESL support; and eighteen percent receive special education services.

Saylesville Elementary School has 47 staff members, including 38 teachers, five instructional assistants, two custodians, a secretary and a principal, who was appointed in Fall 2004. In addition, a full-time reading specialist and a speech and language pathologist, as well as a nurse-teacher, instruct students and provide services both in and out of the classrooms. Saylesville's part-time staff includes a Diagnostic Prescriptive teacher, a social worker, a school psychologist, a health teacher, a band teacher, two physical education teachers, an art teacher, a music teacher and an enrichment/academically talented teacher. These teachers work to integrate and coordinate the units of study with those being taught in the regular education classrooms.

At the present time approximately 60% of the students with special needs receive those services in two self-contained classrooms or through a "pull-out resource service" model. The remaining 40% receive services in their classrooms through a co-teaching inclusion model of instruction. The students in the two self-contained classrooms receive all of their reading, writing and mathematics instruction from a special education teacher, assisted by a teaching assistant. All of these students have a regular education homeroom and are mainstreamed with various levels of support into the regular education setting for social studies, science and special subjects. Saylesville is working toward a full-inclusion model.

A full-time reading specialist provides services to students in their regular and special education classrooms. In addition to school-wide literacy tasks, she is also responsible for training all staff members in implementing Diagnostic Reading Assessments (DRA's), as well as in developing and monitoring Personal Literacy Plans (PLP).

A site-based professional development committee, which comprises five teachers and the principal, oversees requests for professional development and plans professional development opportunities at the school. The two areas of focus are literacy and inclusion/co-teaching practices. In addition, the entire staff participates in a book study program to improve their teaching practices.

Each teacher is contractually allowed one forty-five minute period of class preparation each day. It is important to note that this year most teachers voluntarily agreed to schedule, and planned to use, one of their weekly preparation periods as a common planning period. During this time, teachers meet to plan units of study, discuss their students and consult with the reading specialist regarding the assessments that they are administering this year.

An active parent teacher organization supports events at the school that focus on the whole family. Parent volunteers coordinate two after school enrichment programs, Beyond the Bells and Music Enrichment. These provide additional opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests.

3. PORTRAIT OF SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Saylesville Elementary School is a small suburban school nestled in the hills of Lincoln, Rhode Island. A beautiful playground, complete with a regulation softball field, adjoins the school. Upon entering the building, visitors sense an immediate outpouring of pride and community. The school walls are covered with brightly colored murals and an abundance of student work. Students, as well as visitors, are greeted by a daily hand-written message from the principal. This greeting sets the tone for the day. Students can be seen writing daily suggestions and concerns on a student message board, located nearby.

The faculty and staff at Saylesville Elementary School are deeply committed to their students. They work countless hours "beyond the bells" to provide a quality education for all. Despite their lack of leadership over the past three years, teachers have worked together to keep this school afloat. Their cohesiveness and determination are true assets to this learning community. Under the guidance of strong teacher leaders, they met during the summer to draft a new school improvement plan and to organize the schedules for the coming year. It is obvious that Saylesville teachers "put their kids first."

A new principal, appointed in September 2004, leads the school. Her approachable style and knowledge of instructional practices are a breath of fresh air. In stark contrast to previous years, she is a leader who has a clear vision for the school and who is working hard to encourage everyone to jump on board. In eight short months she has transformed this school from a "top-down" administered school to a school in which everyone feels part of the decision-making process. This is truly a "child-centered" school. Discipline problems have been reduced drastically allowing teachers to focus on improving student learning, as well as on their instructional practices. A sense of school pride and renewal is evident here. Parents, teachers, students and district administrators—all agree that Saylesville is a much happier place this year.

Saylesville is a school that is in transition. It is just beginning to implement several new initiatives aimed at improving student learning. While the new principal has set a new direction for the school, change is difficult. The move to a more inclusionary model for special education students is a major concern that requires planning, professional development and ongoing school-based support. The staff is not clear about how to administer and use assessment data. Much work needs to be done before teachers are truly proficient in the new instructional practices for literacy and numeracy. The forward momentum of this school has been slowed by inconsistent teaching practices and student expectations, as well as by the inefficient use of time and support staff.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Students in some classes are confident, competent problem solvers, while students in other classes do not know where to begin to solve problems and often give up easily. Good problem solving is going on in classrooms where students connect math to their daily routines, where they talk about math strategies and share how they solve problems. They question one another, build on the knowledge of their peers and approach problem solving in a systematic way. They understand that how they solve a problem is as important as the solution. Conversely, the poor problem solvers rarely connect math to their personal experiences. They solve problems in a disorganized way and skip problems that require them to use multiple steps. In these classrooms, students write in their math journals, but they rarely share their solutions, thus limiting the opportunities they have to learn from their peers. On the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination, forty-three percent of the students achieved or exceeded the standard in math concepts, and twenty-eight percent achieved or exceeded the standard in problem solving. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

This inconsistency in student performance carries over to writing. In classrooms, where the writing lessons are focused, students write well. They clearly understand the expectations for quality work and know they will be held accountable. These students write with good leads and supporting details and know how to write for a variety of audiences. They write narratives, persuasive pieces and procedural reports. However, the quality of student writing diminishes in classrooms where the expectations are not clear and follow-thorough is inconsistent. Most students say they like to write in their writers' notebooks because they can write about whatever they want. In classes, where teachers give students consistent, meaningful feedback regarding the quality of their notebook entries, student writing shows improvement. Students add "million dollar words," include a greater number of details and are more willing to share their work. However, in classes, where there is little or no feedback, students' entries in their notebooks lack organization, contain few details and often are illegible. The quality of the entries diminishes, and the entries are shorter. Overall, student writing contains numerous errors in mechanics and conventions. Student performance in writing conventions on the New Standards Reference Examinations has declined over the past three years from seventy percent to fifty-six percent achieving or exceeding the standard. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing classroom assessments)*

The majority of students at Saylesville Elementary School read well. They know how to understand what they read and successfully demonstrate their understanding through projects, presentations and class discussions. Students report that reading makes sense when they read books connected to what they are studying in their other subjects. Many students know how to use reading as a tool for learning. They are motivated, enthusiastic readers. However, not all students know how to use their critical thinking skills. In some classrooms, students know how to answer questions that require them to interpret and analyze the text, but in others, they answer questions at only a literal level. A few struggling readers exist in every grade. While these readers make an effort to decode words, they are unaware of the errors they make, interfering with their accurate understanding of the text. They do not know how to use reading strategies to help them. In addition, some students do not know how to choose books at their appropriate reading levels. When a book is too difficult, they struggle; when it is too easy, they say they are bored. Student performance on the New Standards Reference Examination has declined over the past three years from eighty-five percent to seventy-seven percent meeting the standard in basic understanding and from seventy-five to seventy-two percent meeting the standard in analysis and interpretation. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, parents, and students, school administrator, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom textbooks, 2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students say, "This is the best year yet in school." They say they feel more important. They like working in the school store and serving on the student council. They like being student leaders at the school-wide meetings. Teachers and parents report that students show a more positive attitude toward their learning than in previous years because of the new school leadership and the more positive school climate. Students are curious, ask questions and take pride in their work. Their strong sense of community extends beyond the school. They collect canned goods, write letters to members of the armed forces and raise money in their Caring Coin Drive for Adopt-a-Family and other organizations. They comfortably convey issues of their concern to the principal and their teachers, and they work with them to resolve conflicts. However, in a few classrooms students struggle to stay on task and frequently misbehave. This behavior interrupts their learning, as well as the learning of others in the classroom. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, observing the school outside the classroom, reviewing school and classroom newsletters, newspaper articles)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

♦ *Are curious learners*

♦ *Produce quality work, when held accountable*

♦ *Take an active part in school decision-making*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Teachers are competent instructors of reading, but not all of them differentiate their reading instruction. In classrooms where teachers require students to discuss the books they have read, to use their critical thinking skills and to connect what they have read to the other content areas, most students are confident, competent readers. Teachers in these classrooms teach students to read by using multiple texts at appropriate reading levels for all students. However, in classrooms where teachers require students to answer questions at mainly a literal level and where they rarely allow time for students to discuss the books they have read, students do not read as well. Teachers in many classrooms require all of their students to read the same book, even though they read at different reading levels. Teachers do not use the multiple copies of books that are available for instructional use. They report that these books are not organized or leveled. Consequently, students miss the use of this valuable resource, and teachers miss the opportunity to meet the needs of their individual students. Few teachers use assessment data to make informed decisions about their instruction, again missing opportunities that would help them teach individual students what they need to learn. District and school administrators, as well as teachers—all report that teachers at Saylesville Elementary School are just beginning to implement new instructional reading practices that address diverse learning needs. Teachers report that they have not had sufficient training in the administration and use of DRA's and guided reading instruction. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Some teachers effectively teach their students how to write; others do not. Good writing instructors model the steps of the writing process. They teach their students how to use voice, supporting details and descriptive words when they write. They teach their students how to write for a variety of audiences. They use consistent language, give students specific feedback and hold them accountable for quality work. Students in these classrooms write well and connect their writing to their other content areas. In these classrooms the teacher and the student discuss the student's progress and identify the areas of need. However, teachers in other classrooms do not have the same high expectations for student work, and they provide students with little feedback. These teachers place almost no emphasis on brainstorming and pre-writing, and they expect students to produce only finished written pieces. They seldom require their students to revise or edit their work, and they do not provide their students with opportunities to see their growth as writers. As a result, students in these classrooms are not developing effective writing habits. Not all teachers know how to use the writers' notebook as an effective instructional tool, and they provide few opportunities for students to share their entries. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, students, and school administrator, discussing student work with teachers, 2002-2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Not all teachers teach math well. Few link problem solving to their classroom routines or consistently encourage their students to share their solutions. Many do not use a systematic process to help their students analyze problems. While many teachers administer math assessments, few know how to use this data effectively to inform their instruction. Consequently, many students do not know where to begin to solve problems, and they do not have the confidence to persist. In classes where students are effective problems solvers, teachers use mathematical terms, model and teach multiple strategies, and provide sufficient time for students to explore different ways to solve problems. They expect students to arrive at their own solutions and require them to justify their thinking. These effective teaching practices help students to become independent problem solvers and encourage them to take risks. Teachers say they need more district support for professional development and more materials. Parents report they would like more information about how to help their children with math at home. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, school administrator, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers)*

Despite the many challenges they have faced during the past three years, teachers at Saylesville Elementary School put the needs of their students first. They are hard-working, dedicated professionals. Their willingness to improve their instructional practice is evident; many participate in numerous professional development activities and are open to change. They report that many invest their personal time and money to support teaching and learning. In the absence of leadership, this cohesive staff took the initiative to develop a draft school improvement plan and schedules for the 2004-2005 school year. Their dedication motivates them to move forward as they work through the many new initiatives that began this school year. Their positive attitudes are true assets to the school and serve as models for their students to emulate. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, school administrator, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks)*

Commendations for Saylesville Elementary School

Hard working, dedicated professionals

Cohesive staff

Strong teacher leaders

Recommendations for Saylesville Elementary School

Increase differentiated instruction in reading, writing and math. Continue professional development in these areas.

Develop question techniques and instructional practices to promote critical thinking skills.

Increase the use of assessment data to inform instruction. Develop monitoring tools to determine student progress. Provide professional development on how to implement assessments, and use the data.

Provide parents with information about how to help their students at home with their reading, writing and math.

Utilize the multiple copies of texts that are available. Organize, level and store books in a common, central location.

Increase opportunities for students to share and justify their solutions to problems. Provide adequate time for students to explore math concepts and make mathematical connections.

Explicitly model the steps of the writing process, and hold students accountable for quality work. Provide students with consistent feedback on how to improve. Develop a common understanding of how to use writers' notebook effectively.

Continue to move towards a readers' and writers' workshop model of instruction.

Recommendations for Lincoln School District

Continue to provide and support professional development in reading, writing and math. Explore ways to fund classroom coverage so that all teachers can attend.

Provide more leveled books and assessment tools at all grade levels.

Continue to provide professional development and support in the proper administration of Diagnostic Reading Assessments and writing of Personal Literacy Plans.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

Teachers, students, parents and district administrators all agree that Saylesville Elementary School is a more positive place to be this year, and they credit the new principal for this positive change. The new principal has a clear vision for this school, which she slowly is implementing. She has reallocated time to provide job-embedded professional development and text-based discussions aimed at improving instructional practices. She communicates frequently with her staff, students and parents. Her daily morning letter promotes the importance of reading and writing to her staff, as well as to the students. Her bi-monthly school-wide meetings, planned and led by the students, promote school pride and community. She values and recognizes the accomplishments of her staff and communicates this to them in her daily log. As a result, teachers say their morale has improved; students say they can voice their opinions; and parents say they feel welcome at the school. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, 2004 SALT Survey report, Saylesville self-study)*

Teachers do not effectively utilize the reading teacher, and they do not clearly understand her role. Both district and school administrators want to move toward a coaching model of instruction, but she has not been adequately trained to do that. The reading specialist currently services students, as well as acts as a literacy coach. This model does not effectively meet the needs of students or their teachers. Her responsibilities, as coach, reduce the amount of time she has available to service students. Additionally, teachers do not take advantage of the time the school has allocated to consult with her, thus limiting their opportunities to improve their instruction. *(following students, observing classes, talking with teachers and school administrator, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers report that scheduling is a nightmare!! They say there is not enough time in the school day to meet with their colleagues, yet they do not consistently use the mutually free time they have to plan or coordinate their lessons. They have little time available to meet with special educators or the support staff. Additionally, teachers lose valuable time during "DEAR" (Drop Everything and Read). Few students read, and many misbehave. This evidence correlates with conclusions in the Saylesville self-study document. Because of the ineffective use of this time, teachers have fewer opportunities to coordinate their instruction, utilize their expertise and share their ideas and practices. This decreases valuable learning time for everyone. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with school improvement team and school administrator, talking with students, teachers and school administrator)*

Saylesville Elementary School is moving toward a more inclusive model of instruction for special education students. The resource teachers currently service students both in and out of the regular education classrooms. In some classrooms, special education students are mixed with their grade level peers. They receive instruction and support from both the regular educator and the special educator. These teachers effectively use a co-teaching model to meet the needs of their students. However, in other classrooms the resource teacher instructs the special education students separately at the back of the room, which defeats the purpose of inclusion. Additionally, some resource teachers only circulate through the classrooms and do not actively participate in the instruction there. When the resource teacher and the regular education teachers plan and coordinate their instruction, the inclusion model is more successful, and teachers report a decrease in behavior problems. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrator, reviewing district strategic plan, district and school policies and practices)*

At present, no school improvement plan is in place at Saylesville Elementary School. However, the school improvement team spent extensive time developing a draft plan that will be implemented during the 2005-2006 school year. As a result of a thorough, in-depth self-study, this draft targets identified areas of need aimed at increasing student achievement. The action steps clearly state changes that need to occur in student learning behaviors and teaching practices. These action steps correlate with the findings of this SALT report. The draft identifies what monitoring tools will be used, how the school and district will support the plan and how the plan will be evaluated. This draft, as written, is an effective tool to improve student learning. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrator, reviewing school improvement plan draft)*

Not all teachers maintain portfolios of student work. The content and use of portfolios varies from class to class. Few students and teachers clearly understand the purpose of portfolios or how to use them to improve student learning. Most are a composite of student work that has been collected without student reflection or input. As a result, students miss valuable opportunities to see their growth as learners and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Few portfolios follow the district guidelines. As presently used, most portfolios are ineffective tools to improve student learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, school administrator, meeting with school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, district and school policies and practices)*

Commendations for Saylesville Elementary School

Strong sense of community

Dynamic principal, who has a clear vision

Effective school improvement plan draft

Recommendations for Saylesville Elementary School

Clearly define and articulate the role of the reading teacher. Provide professional development to support the coaching model. Utilize her time more effectively.

Utilize mutually free time more consistently to ensure coordination of instruction among teachers and support staff.

Utilize the teaching expertise of the staff and in the district to promote effective teaching practices. Continue to support staff in the implementation of new initiatives.

Establish criteria and common expectations for student behavior during DEAR time. Ensure productive use of that time.

Clearly define and articulate the expectations for inclusion. Increase inclusion practices and time for teacher collaboration. Continue to provide professional development and support for the inclusion model. Observe effective inclusion models both within the district and outside of it.

Adopt and implement the school improvement plan. Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the action steps.

Follow the district guidelines for the contents and use of student portfolios. Provide professional development and support to implement them effectively.

Hold teachers accountable for the implementation of new initiatives.

Recommendations for Lincoln School District

Creatively find funds to hire a literacy coach.

Provide professional development in coaching and in co-teaching and inclusion models.

Continue to support the principal in her efforts to implement new initiatives.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The SALT team acknowledges how well you have pulled together during the past three years to support your students and one another. Your strong community spirit is a testament to your hard work and dedication. What you have accomplished since the arrival of your new principal is amazing! It is time to move on to the next step.

Develop continuity and common expectations for quality work in all classrooms. Take advantage of your skilled staff, and continue to learn from one another. Use your mutually free time more consistently and effectively to ensure the delivery of quality instruction. Place more emphasis on differentiation. Your students will only benefit.

You are fortunate to receive such extensive professional development in literacy. Now is the time to include math in these endeavors. We acknowledge that change is difficult and realize that you are just at the beginning stages of implementation. Under the guidance of your new principal, continue to work together as a learning community. Have the confidence to apply what you learn, and don't be afraid to take risks. Planning, professional development, and district and school-based support are the keys to your success.

The SALT team urges you to use the conclusions and recommendations in this report to guide your next steps. We wish you well as you continue to improve.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Saylesville Elementary School

April 15, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

> Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

> Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

> Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1ˢᵗ edition.*

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began

daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit

observation of a portion of the visit

thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.

2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.

3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.

4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
May 24, 2005

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Saylesville Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Saylesville Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

♦ *direct classroom observation*

♦ *observing the school outside of the classroom*

♦ *following 8 students for a full day*

♦ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*

♦ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*

> *teachers*
> *school improvement team*
> *school and district administrators*
> *students*
> *parents*

♦ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*

♦ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*

♦ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*

♦ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in* Information Works!

♦ *reviewing the following documents:*

> *district and school policies and practices*
> *records of professional development activities*
> *classroom assessments*
> *school improvement plan for Saylesville Elementary School*
> *district strategic plan*
> *2004 SALT Survey report*
> *classroom textbooks*
> *2004 Information Works!*
> *2002, 2003, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
> *Lincoln School Department Binders:*
> > *Mentor Program*

Teacher Evaluation

Finding Your Way Through Special Education

BLT: Bluepring for Learning and Teaching Middle School

Files:

Newsletters

Conference/Workshop Requests

School and Classroom Newsletters

Newspaper Articles

Lincoln Teachers Association contract

State Assessment Results for Saylesville Elementary School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

♦ *against performance standards;*

♦ *across student groups within the school;*

♦ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments
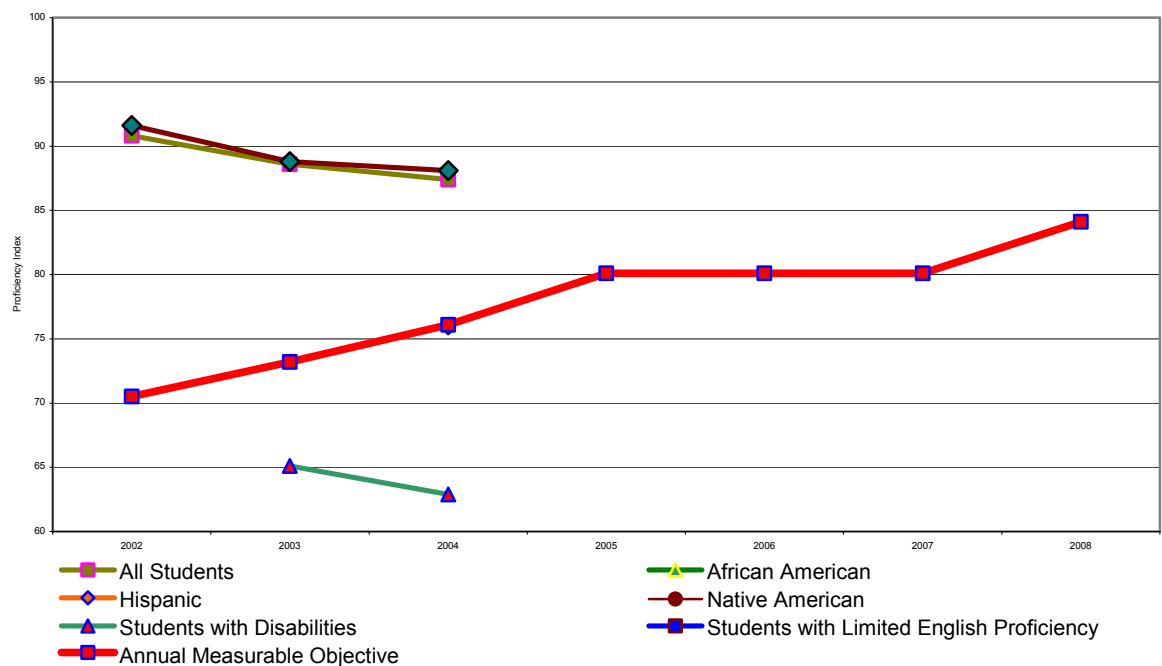Saylesville Elementary School State Assessment Results of 2004
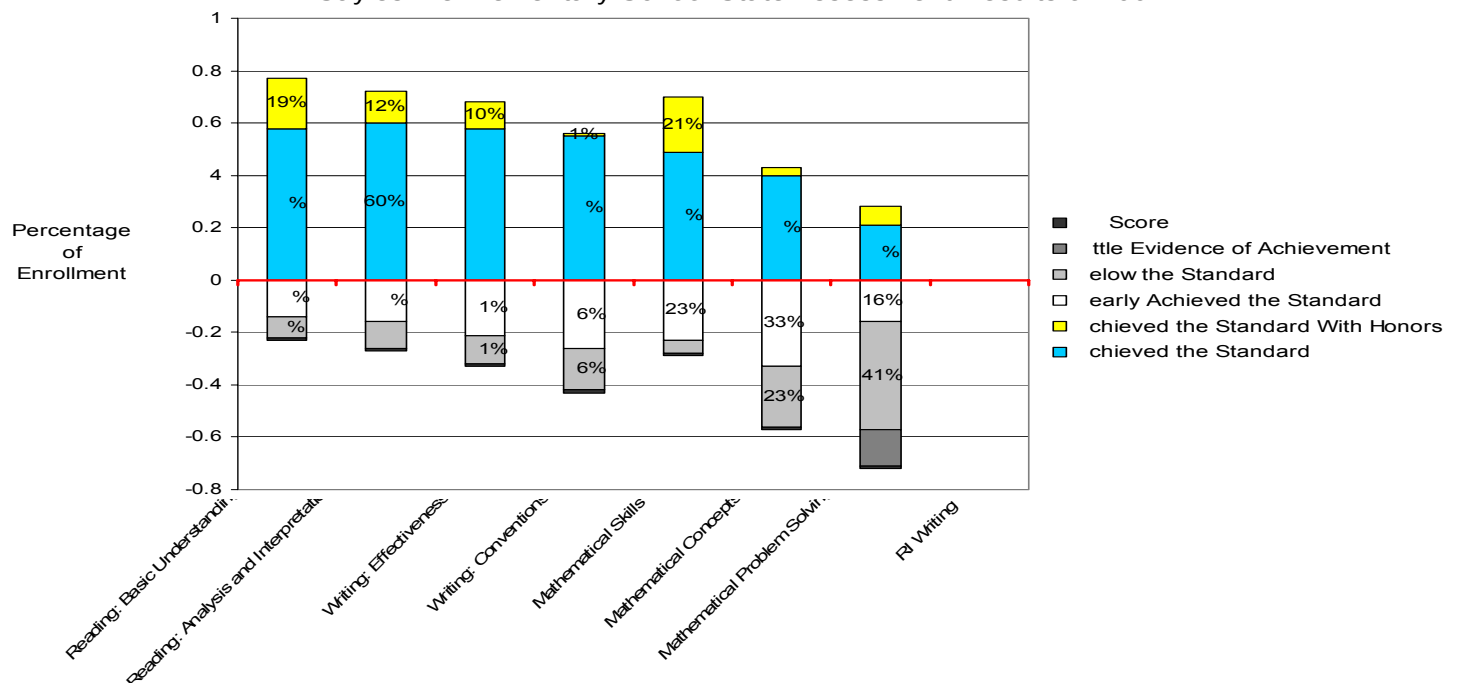
**R**ESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display showing targets and index scores, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gap.

Table 2 2004-2005 Student Results across Subgroups

Annual Proficiency, Saylesville Elementary School, ELA, Gr. 4

Annual Proficiency, Saylesville Elementary Gr. 4 Math
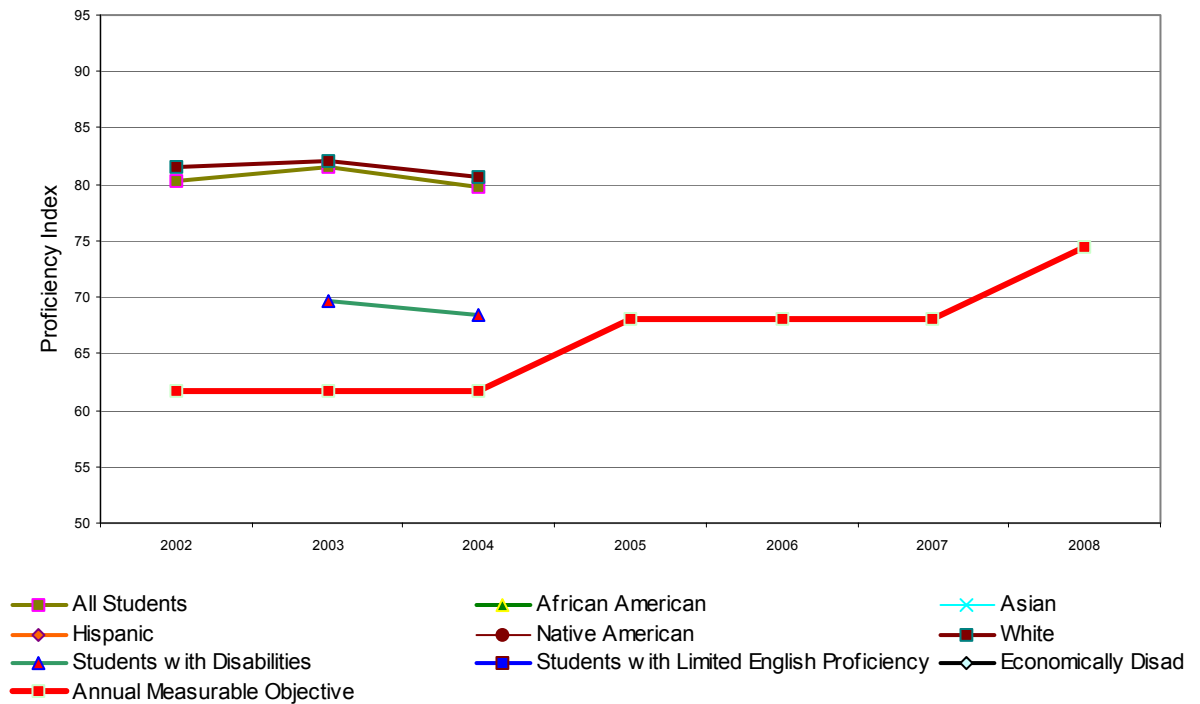
REPORT CARD FOR SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This Report Card show the performance of Saylesville Elementary School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Saylesville Elementary School as a school in need of improvement, making insufficient progress.

Table 4. Report Card for Saylesville Elementary School

2004 Rhode Island School Report Card   **Page 1 of 3**

RI SCHOOL: **SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

RI DISTRICT: **LINCOLN**

GRADE: **04**

OVERVIEW | CLOSE THIS WINDOW

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INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE: 76.1				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 61.7			
STUDENT GROUP	**THIS SCHOOL**	**TARGET MET?**	**THIS DISTRICT**	**THE STATE**	**THIS SCHOOL**	**TARGET MET?**	**THIS DISTRICT**	**THE STATE**

All Students	87.4	YES	88.5	86.1	79.8	YES	82.6	77.5
African Americans	*	YES	*	77.8	*	YES	*	65.9
Asian	*	YES	*	84.5	*	YES	*	77.1
Hispanic	*	YES	*	75.8	*	YES	*	65.8
Native Americans	*	YES	*	83.9	*	YES	*	73
White	88.1	YES	84.3	88.5	80.7	YES	83.3	82
Students with Disabilities	62.9	NO	65.2	69.5	68.4	YES	66.8	66.4
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	*	68.9	*	YES	*	61
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	*	YES	73.8	77.8	*	YES	71.2	68.4

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	100	YES	97.4	99.1
Mathematics	100	YES	98.7	99.4

ATTENDANCE RATE	Target: 90%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
	95.8	YES	96.1	94.8

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	8	1
Mathematics Index Score	9	0
Percent Tested	2	0
Attendance Rate	1	0

THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:

School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress

Information Works! data for Saylesville Elementary School is available at http://www.ridoe.net.

THE SAYLESVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Elizabeth A'Vant
Parent

Jayne Cahill
Reading Specialist

Shelley Cavanaugh
Grade 4 Teacher

Gail DeGuilo
Special Education Teacher

Sue Flynn
Grade 5 Teacher

Joanne Koczera
Librarian

Gayle L'Esperance
Grade 3 Teacher

Margaret Lemay
Principal
SIT Co-chair

Michael Manzi
Grade 6 Teacher

Karen Mollohan
Parent

Grace Poulin
Parent

Lisa Rose
Parent

Roberta Ryan
Nurse Teacher

Karen Ventrone
Enrichment

James Zanfini
Grade 2 Teacher
SIT Co-chair

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Ruth S. Haynsworth
Grade 5 Teacher
Stony Lane Elementary School
North Kingston, Rhode Island
On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education
To serve as SALT Fellow
Team Chair

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Principal
Stone Hill Elementary School
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Cynthia Blythe
Grade 1-3 Teacher
Nyatt Elementary School
Barrington, Rhode Island

Brenda Bush
Grade 3 Teacher
Ashton Elementary School
Cumberland, Rhode Island

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Grade 3/4 Teacher
Leo A. Savoie School
Woonsocket, Rhode Island

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Grade 3 Teacher
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